

THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE

I. Historical Background

The business of the Executive Branch of the United States Government is carried out through 10 departments headed by members of the President's Cabinet and 41 independent agencies. The largest departments number their personnel in the tens of thousands, and some of the independent agencies are nearly as large. These agencies range from those which function in active and fluid areas where policies change and complex coordination is required, such as the United States Information Agency and the Foreign Operations Administration; through equally large agencies with rather more stable policy to guide them, such as the Federal Power Commission and the General Services Administration; to small bodies whose functioning rarely if ever requires the direct attention of the White House, such as the American Battle Monuments Commission. The agencies also differ widely in the degree of autonomy they enjoy, either by statute or tradition. The majority are direct emissaries of the President in carrying out responsibilities with which he is directly charged, while a smaller number, such as the Federal Reserve Board, normally perform their specialized functions independent of any higher authority.

Final responsibility for all these organs of government rests with the President of the United States, who is also the head of one of the two major political parties which periodically contest for the control of the national administration. In a governmental system based so directly on the expressed consent of the governed with quadrennial referral to the electorate, the continuing approval of the public is an inseparable part of the function of government. The President is the employee of the voters. Political expediency is an essential element in his execution of the will of his employers. His role as party chief makes frequent demands on his attention.

From the preceding observations, it is apparent that the President cannot hold in his own hands the reins which control the functioning of all departments and agencies. The majority of the agencies are of more recent origin than the government departments. In an earlier day virtually all the business of government was handled through one or another of the departments which are headed by a member of the Cabinet. In that

period the Cabinet sufficed as the staff. It constituted the group of people through whom the President exercised his authority downward through the executive organization. Even the political responsibilities of the President funneled through the Cabinet, it being a traditional custom for the Postmaster General to be the Chairman of the party National Committee. As the departments grew in size, it became more and more difficult for the head of a department to administer and direct a large organization and also serve as a policy advisor of the President.

Historically, this inability of Cabinet members to serve both as intimate advisors and busy administrators appeared long before any formal reorganization of the White House staff. As early as the Theodore Roosevelt administration the term "kitchen cabinet" came into popular use to designate a group of non-official, personal advisors on whom the President leaned in making important decisions. But the White House organization remained small until the 1930's. President Coolidge had two secretaries and about 25 clerks. These numbers did not quite double under President Hoover. Six administrative assistants were added to the White House staff under President Franklin Roosevelt, but the organization remained informal. During the Roosevelt regime, many new agencies of an emergency and temporary character were created and vast new areas of activity came to be a permanent and accepted part of the function of government. This period was marked by a rapid increase in the productivity of labor, and a concomitant expansion of the service industries in the United States. The expanded activities of government may be regarded as a part of this growth of the service industries.

Reorganization was overdue when President Truman took office, and he addressed himself vigorously to the problem. The six administrative assistants, together with a new "Assistant to the President" became the nucleus of the staff organization later developed under President Eisenhower. But this remained an improvised rather than a planned solution to the crucial problems of "big government" until the Administration took office.

The role of the Vice President, undefined and relatively unimportant in the past, has also been developed considerably in the last three years. By statute he has no assigned function in the White House routine of work. Today, however, he is an active and influential member of the President's immediate

entourage. In the President's absence he presides over meetings of the Cabinet and of the National Security Council. He also substitutes for the President at various ceremonial functions. The question of whether he can take over the duties of the President temporarily has never been definitely resolved. However, the present Vice President, because of this intimate and active role, would be better prepared and informed for assuming such a role than probably any of his predecessors.

II. Theoretical Background

The formula under which White House business is conducted today derives from three sources: the traditional system of the conduct of government, sometimes derisively termed "red tape"; the developing science of business administration; and the military staff system.

"Red tape" means the complex system of channels, coordination, initialings and signatures by which the day-to-day business of government is conducted. Properly employed, it prevents conflicts and other purposes. But the tortuous course through many offices is time consuming and routine business moves at a slow pace. Urgent matters cannot afford the time lag involved in this routine handling. The system has developed over a long period of time and its rules are valid and essential if the hundreds of thousands of Government workers are to function as a team. The new organization in the White House is superimposed on this system to provide express channels for top-level action on urgent and important business.

During the past 40 years, business administration has become a prominent subject in university curricula, research and textbooks. The problem of any large organization is to create machinery by which thousands of individuals carry out the decisions made by one individual who is the responsible chief. Through successive echelons, top decisions are spread downward, implementing actions being taken according to authority granted to these successive lower echelons. Many theories have been elaborated, but an illustrative example is the rule laid down a generation ago by Chester Barnard, a businessman-scholar, that an executive should deal regularly with not more than four to six subordinates, who in turn should deal regularly with four to six subordinates of their own.

The military staff system is historically the oldest method of transmitting the decisions of a responsible chief to successively

larger groups of subordinates. Large armies antedate any other type of large integrated units, public or private. Three rules, enshrined in military staff organization, are important in the present White House organization. One is the clear assignment of responsibility and authority, the latter being commensurate with the former. The second is the concept of the chief of staff. Under this concept, the commander deals primarily with only one man, who in turn deals with the group of subordinates responsible in specified fields. The commander deals also with these subordinates as occasion requires, but only when he or the chief of staff agree it is necessary. This substantially separates the making of policy from the execution of policy, the commander being involved in the former, the chief of staff taking action on the latter. The third rule derived from military tradition is that a staff member has no authority of his own but speaks in the name of the commander and voices the latter's authority.

III. Current Staff Procedure

Organized on functional lines, the White House Office today is arranged to relieve the President of all but vital decisions. Even in reaching these decisions, many details can be eliminated, so that the President can often make a choice between relatively simple alternatives that are put before him. The staff analyzes problems, collects pertinent data and comment, attempts to agree on implications and importance, and then presents the results to the President, generally in an oral briefing. If this is not possible, the problem is presented in a short report or memorandum, together with a one-page summary containing salient facts as well as dissenting opinions.

Basic to the system is the rule that no verbal assumptions are to be made; everything possible is put in writing for staff processing. Whenever a cabinet officer or other government official makes a recommendation to the President, he is asked to submit it in writing, to be logged in by the Staff Secretariat. From there papers go through channels to appropriate officials, both on the staff and in the departments and agencies, for analysis and comment. Statistics are gathered, implications of the subject studied, recommendations made, and final drafts prepared for the President. Thus there is available not only the original proposal, but also supplementary data from everyone whose views may be relevant. It is on the basis of this

information that the decisions of the administration are reached. Whenever possible, the staff submits a recommendation with which all interested officials have concurred.

In structure, the White House staff comprises a "Chief of Staff," his deputy, eight "service chiefs," two house-keeping units, and a number of special assistants active in highly specialized fields of operation. Altogether, the staff comprises about 45 top-level men, and 260 clerks, stenographers and secretaries, with an annual pay-roll of around \$1,700,000.

IV. Personnel and Duties

A. Chief of Staff

Heading the staff structure is Sherman Adams, who has the official title of "the Assistant to the President." He has described his task as "the management of the President's desk." President Eisenhower has remarked that "I think of Adams as my chief of staff, but I don't call him that because the politicians think it sounds too military."

Since he speaks with the voice of the President, Adams has great power, which reaches everywhere in the government, and includes a considerable influence in the formulation of policy. But once policy has been established by the President, Adams confines his work to the problem of how that policy can best be implemented.

He regularly attends meetings of the Cabinet and often of the National Security Council, and is present at many of the President's business talks with visitors. On other matters he may be in and out of the President's office a dozen times a day. He has to know the President's habits, moods and opinions, so that if he makes a decision without consulting the President, he will know that he is on safe ground.

It is up to Adams to bring together the department and agency heads who may have an interest in a specific problem. He can and does hold over their heads the fact that if they do not arrive at a reasonable solution, he will write the recommendation himself and this will be the one that goes to the President. Papers carrying Adams' approval are the ones that the President is most likely to sign without question. The President has delegated authority liberally and, having chosen his aides with care, he trusts their judgment.

With a personal staff of nine, Adams handles 300 phone calls a day and the same number of letters. He decides which letters are important enough to be brought to the President's attention. Similarly he screens all documents, problems and issues, seeing that only the most important go to the President to decrease demands on the President's time.

Aside from this screening process, Adams' principal duty is to run the staff and assure that it functions properly. In addition, he assumes personal responsibility for day-to-day operations in the political field, i.e., the political implications of issues passing across his desk, and also, to a large extent, for matters concerning the so-called independent agencies.

Inning unusual circumstances, on at least five days of each work week, Adams presides over a meeting of most staff members. James Hagerty, Press Secretary, may take over on Wednesday in order to elicit answers to questions he expects to be asked at the weekly press conference. At these meetings, assignments of work are made, pending problems discussed, and reports made on work being done.

Immediately under Adams is Maj. Gen. (retired) Wilton Persons, 59, the Deputy Assistant to the President. Whenever Adams is absent from Washington, Persons takes over as head of the staff. His principal assignment, however, is handling liaison with Congress, i.e., persuading Congress to pass Administration legislation. He organizes the Administration's presentation before committees, lined up witnesses, and supplies supporting documents. When Congress is in session, he briefs the President daily on the status of the Administration's legislative program and on the mood of Congress. To assist him he has a small staff headed by I. Jack Martin, 47, former administrative assistant to the late Senator Robert Taft, who handles contacts with the Senate, and Bryce Harlow, 38, who does the same for the House of Representatives.

B. "Service Chiefs"

James Hagerty, 46, the Press Secretary, is authorized to speak publicly for the President, and is one of the few—
the others are Adams, Secretary of State Dulles, and Central Intelligence Agency Director Allen Dulles—who are authorized to visit the President at night on a matter of national consequence.

Hagerty keeps the President abreast of the latest news developments and current issues, and is responsible for preparing the President for questions that are likely to be asked at the weekly press conference. He also serves as the chief source of White House news, being the sole regular channel from the White House to press, radio, and television. His assistant is Murray Snyder, 44.

Special Counsel Gerald Morgan, 47, for two years (1945-1949) assistant legislative counsel to the House of Representatives, serves as legal adviser to the President. Morgan drafts executive orders and proposed legislation originating in the White House. In the case of draft bills prepared elsewhere, he studies them for legal implications, possible conflicts of interest between governmental branches, and legislative language. Once a bill has been passed by Congress and sent to the President, Morgan studies its effects and ramifications and advises whether the President should sign it or not.

Kevin McCann, 51, writes or supervises the writing of speeches, letters and documents of all kinds except executive orders and legislation. It is his job to insure that the President's thoughts, whether expressed in speech or public statements, are lucid and correctly understood by the audience.

Gabriel Rauge, 41, as the Economic Administrative Assistant, is the staff's economic expert and the President's principal advisor on all problems of business, economics, tariffs, expansion policies and international finance. He is also consulted on farm issues, power matters, housing problems and mortgages and credit policies. He works closely with the Treasury Department and other agencies in the field, and also with Arthur Burns, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA). The Council is the watchdog of the US economy. Burns has the job of closely following economic statistics and determining trends, so that he can assess continually the economic condition of the country and suggest to the President what steps to take to maintain a viable economy. Rauge and Burns usually report together weekly to the President.

Fred Seaton, 46, former Senator from Nebraska (appointed Secretary of the Interior on 31 May 1956), and Howard Pyle, 49, former Governor of Arizona, have the title of Deputy Assistants. Seaton serves as White House liaison with government agencies, and is under Adams, who makes the final decisions--in charge of patronage, especially top-level appointments. Pyle specializes in federal-state relations; for example, highways and

projects involving grants-in-aid. He also edits and publishes a single mimeographed sheet, issued two or three times a week, which condenses into two or three terse lines the official stand on every issue that arises, usually supplemented with pertinent Presidential quotes. This publication has a restricted circulation of less than 1,000 to top government officials, leading Republican members of Congress, and Republican Governors.

The Appointment Secretary (vacant since the resignation of Bernard Shadley) is the channel for seeing the President and is responsible for keeping the President's calling list to a minimum. He must keep not only a daily eye on the President's schedule but as much as three months in advance. The White House receives daily an average of 300 written and 30 phone requests for Presidential speeches, appearances, messages of greeting and personal interviews. The Appointment Secretary himself rejects most of these; and for the remainder, he must recommend which seem most worthy of acceptance.

The Assistant for National Security, Dillon Anderson, 49, is in charge of all matters relating to national security and defense and to foreign affairs. He keeps closely informed on the activities of the National Security Council (NSC), the Joint Chiefs of Staff and civil defense. He normally briefs the President on all matters relating to national security, especially those to be discussed in the NSC. Anderson attends all meetings of the NSC, where he introduces each item on the agenda and gives a brief statement on its background including its relation to existing policy. He explains why the policy is up for revision and how the NSC previously acted on it or on related subjects. He outlines alternatives, divergent views, if any, and the action recommended by the NSC Planning Board. He is responsible for circulating weekly a forward agenda and, before each meeting, a detailed agenda and copies of the policy recommendations to be considered under respective items. After each meeting, he drafts a brief record of action, which, when approved by the President, records US policy on matters covered.

In addition, Anderson presides over meetings held three times a week of the NSC Planning Board, which duplicates NSC membership at the Assistant Secretary level. Members are nominated by the departments and are appointed by the President after approval by the Special Assistant.

C. House-Keeping Units

The two house-keeping units are the Staff Secretariat and the Cabinet Secretariat. Col. Andrew J. Goodpastor, 40, the Staff Secretary, is Adams' right-hand man. He is, in effect, the White House office manager. Normally he sees the President at least once a day. He is conversant with developments in all fields, and is informed on the reactions of the President and Adams to them. When the President is at Gettysburg, Goodpastor does most of the shuttling between there and the White House.

All papers coming to the White House from the Cabinet, NSC and the agencies are routed through the Staff Secretariat which logs them. As questions arise, Goodpastor and his aides, working with Adams, decide how they shall be handled and which staff members and agencies consulted, and issue requests for action. They consider questions of overlapping jurisdiction which they not infrequently resolve themselves.

Maxwell Ladd, 45, the Cabinet Secretary, serves the Cabinet much as Anderson does the NSC, and integrates its work with the White House staff. He organizes Cabinet meetings, prepares its agenda, and follows up on its decisions. He prepares a pre-meeting agenda, arranges advance circulation of papers to be discussed, and drafts a post-meeting statement of decisions taken. He also serves as a staff to the Sub-Cabinet, a group which, meeting regularly with Adams, takes much of the load off the department heads by handling problems itself or by resolving issues before submitting them to the full Cabinet.

D. Special Assistants

Working closely with the "service chiefs," particularly with Adams, are the special assistants who function in highly specialized fields. Some are full time, while others serve more as consultants. Harold Stassen is charged with planning for disarmament. Joseph Dodge, former Budget Director, coordinates foreign economic policies and advises on the broad policy aspects of foreign economic aid. Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Lewis Strauss also acts as the President's personal advisor on atomic energy. Clarence Sundell is special advisor on tariffs and trade policy. Clarence Francis, former General Foods Board Chairman, works on plan for disposing of agricultural surpluses.

Philip Young, chairman of the Civil Service Commission, is the White House advisor on government personnel matters. Meyer Wertheimer specializes in governmental reorganization and federal-state relations. William R. Jackson is assigned to coordinate foreign policy and formulate and carry out broad projects in international affairs designed to improve relations with other peoples.

V. The National Security Council and the Operations Coordinating Board

The Executive Office of the President includes several of the independent agencies which have an intimate relation to the White House Office. These are the Bureau of the Budget, the Council of Economic Advisors and the Office of Defense Mobilization. Also included are two agencies which play especially important roles in the present government structure. One is the National Security Council, created by Congress during the Truman administration; the other is the Operations Coordinating Board, created by Executive Order during the present administration.

The National Security Council, headed by the President himself with the Departments of State and Defense particularly concerned, formulates policy recommendations in all matters pertaining to the national security. When the President approves, these formulations become the policy of the Government.

The Operations Coordinating Board is also the primary interest of the Departments of State and Defense, with other agencies participating as appropriate. Through this membership of departments and agencies concerned, the Board checks on and guides the implementation of policies pertaining to national security when such implementation requires action by more than one department or agency.

Both these agencies meet frequently, and all meetings of their top-level or subordinate groups are attended by White House representatives. Neither has personnel of its own except for a secretariat. The members and their deputies are *ex officio*, deriving from their principal duties in the departments and executive agencies.

VI. Sources

- Kodreson, Dillon. "The President and National Security," Atlantic Monthly CXXVII (January, 1954), pp. 42-46.
- Collins, Frederic. "Who Makes the Decisions?" New Republic CXXIV (19 March 1956), pp. 8-10.
- Cutler, Robert. "The Development of the National Security Council," Foreign Affairs XXIV (April, 1956), pp. 441-454.
- "Eisenhower's White House," Fortune LVI (July, 1953), pp. 75-77.
- "If It's O.K. With Adams, It's O.K. with Eisenhower," U.S. News and World Report LXIX (14 October 1955), pp. 30-35.
- "O.K., G.A.," Time LVII (9 January 1956), pp. 18-22.
- Phillips, Cobell. "Executives for the Other Executive," New York Times Magazine, 5 June 1955, p. 11.
- "The Way Ike Does His Job," U.S. News and World Report LXVIII (31 December 1954), pp. 31-33.
- "Then the President's Army--How the White House Runs," U.S. News and World Report LXIX (12 August 1955), p. 46.
- "The White House Team Gets a New Make-Up," Business Week, 26 March 1955, pp. 30-31.
- "The White Government Decision-Making Howl," Business Week, 19 January 1955, pp. 38-39.
- "He's Running the Country Now!" U.S. News and World Report LXIX (7 October 1955), pp. 28-35.
- United States Government Organization Manual 1954-55, Federal Register Division, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration.

SECRET

1 June 1956
10 copies

Memorandum Report - K-

THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE (unclassified)

Distribution: 1 June 1956

25X1A9a

25X1A2g

DOCUMENT NO. _____
NO ANSWER IN CLASS
IN PICTURES
MAIL NUMBER TO: TS S C 2011
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTHOR: KG 10-2
DATE: 1/16/21 REVIEWER: GOMBO